

To the Editor,

If you have not seen the WCVB Chronicle episode about Rail Trails that aired recently and featured the Dedham Heritage Rail Trail project, you might want to check it out. To find it, go to Youtube and put "Chronicle rail trail" in the search box. It will turn up three segments of the show. They are titled: "Getting rail trail plans on track," "Repurposing derelict railroad tracks to rail trails," and "Walk through Newburyport's history on the Clipper City Rail Trail." The Dedham trail is featured in the first segment but all are worth viewing if you want to get a more accurate sense of what a rail trail could be for Dedham – some day.

On September 30th the closing on my former home in Dedham will happen. Six years ago I moved to Dedham from Newburyport and got involved in the Dedham Rail Trail project after having such a great experience with the rail trail in Newburyport and rail trails elsewhere. I am now residing back in Newburyport, a block from the Clipper City Rail Trail.

In the time I lived in Dedham, I was part of a great group of fellow "Dedhamites" who tried to get the Dedham Heritage Rail Trail to become a reality.

Some comments on social media and elsewhere indicate that some who oppose the Dedham rail trail are annoyed that some supporters of the project don't "give it up" and "accept that they lost." After viewing the Chronicle piece, maybe people will wonder – who actually lost?

What was "won" is the status quo – a ten acre piece of public land that had over eight dumpsters of trash pulled out of it just in the last five years. Seems unfortunate to say the least. As you'll see from the Chronicle episode on rail trails across the state, there were no "hidden costs" and no crime waves. What you will see are people getting exercise and spending time with family, friends, or just by themselves. The episode confirms that the State pays for all construction because these projects are truly so beneficial.

The reason I got involved in the Dedham project was not because it could be a nice linear park. That would be fine but my incentive came from having experienced how smart it is to have a park that doubles as a safer way to get around on foot and/or bicycle. With three pedestrians having been struck and killed (in crosswalks) in Dedham in the short time I lived there, I can say that a lot more needs to happen to improve safety on that front – above and beyond a rail trail.

Proposed greenways on Rte. 1 and by Wigwam Pond as well as the Dedham Rail Trail would be an incredible jumpstart to making things safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Let's hope all these projects happen. Would these trails have helped the pedestrians who were hit by cars? No, but they are the bedrock of creating a place that prioritizes people over cars and they would go a long way toward creating safe options for walking and biking around town.

To those who say "give it up" I say, nobody should ever "give up" trying to make things safer for people to walk and/or bike and stay healthy. That is at the heart of what these paths are all about. That's why – as you'll see in the Chronicle episode, the host of the show seemed puzzled and asked: what makes Dedham "different" than the dozens of other Massachusetts towns – from Northampton to Boston where these paths have proven to be such an asset?

Dedham is a wonderful town and is not different in this way. Greenways and rail trails would be great for the town just as they are everywhere else. With the tremendous volunteer spirit of Dedham residents, such greenways would be cherished, protected and cared for like none other in the State!

Hopefully the Chronicle piece will provide people with the truth from a source that they feel is more neutral and not just one side or another trying to convince them. Although the Chronicle piece does confirm what the Friends of the DHRT were saying all along!

And to all those who say – "oh it'll definitely happen eventually in Dedham," you must understand that it will not happen unless more people speak up and work at dispelling the myths around the project.

To all the great friends I made in Dedham and who I miss a lot, bring your bikes up and we'll take a spin! To those who oppose, the invitation extends to you as well! You'll find me on the rail trail pretty much every day!

Georganna
(Former Dedham Resident)